SDL

LABOR DEFENSE



Manifesto
Resolutions
Constitution

(ILLUSTRATED)

Adopted by the First National Conference, held in Ashland Auditorium, Chicago, June 28, 1925

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INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE

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FOREWORD.

The First National Conference for Labor Defense was held in Chicago at Ashland Auditorium, on Sunday, June 28, 1925. Despite the short period of preparation, more than one hundred delegates, sent by workers' organizations in all parts of the country, were in attendance. Scores of endorsements were received from trade unions and societies of workers not in a position to send delegates. Prominent figures in the labor and liberal movements sent greetings to the conference. A number of former class war prisoners and men now under indictment, took active part in the conference. Class war prisoners wrote letters expressing their happiness that unity in defense had become the order of the day. As it turned out, the conference laid the foundation for this unity.

The conference was called to order by its chairman, James P. Cannon, at 10:30 a. m. By 7:30 p. m. when they adjourned, the delegates had for the first time in the history of the labor movement in America, set up a national organization pledged to defend all persecuted and imprisoned workers, regardless of their political or industrial affiliations. The name chosen for this organization was "International Labor Defense." The unanimity of all the conference decisions was an indication of the enthusiasm of these representatives of thousands of workers for the principle of unity in defense of the interests of the whole working class. The keynote of the conference was this very oneness of opinion concerning the great problem before it: Unity for Labor Defense.

A word should be said here about the great mass meeting with which the conference wound up. Temple Hall was jammed with no less than two thousand workers who came to hear delegates to the conference tell of its deliberations and its meaning. Altho the speakers represented various shades of opinion, there was complete accord in their remarks. They all felt and expressed the feeling that "International Labor Defense" had come into existence to fulfill a long needed and important place in the struggle of American workers. Bishop William Montgomery Brown, Ralph Chaplin, an I. W. W. ex-prisoner, Andrew T. McNamara, a prominent trade union leader, Benjamin Gitlow and James P. Cannon, the secretary of International Labor Defense and chairman of the conference, were the speakers.

The rousing spirit of this first mass meeting held by International Labor Defense and the generous response of the audience to the appeal for funds to commence the work, were most inspiring. The spirit of the conference and the mass meeting will drive the International Labor Defense forward to great achievements and make it a power for the defense of the workers. Every class conscious worker belongs in its ranks.

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MANIFESTO.



There are not less than 128 workers confined in American prisons because of their political opinions and because of their activity in behalf of the workers' cause. A half-hundred more await trial. No crime has been proved against any of these workers. They are in prison because they fought against capitalist exploitation, and because they organized, inspired and led workers in the struggle for class betterment. They are class war prisoners.

The last ten years have witnessed more persecution and jailing of workers engaged in the fight against economic and political enslavement than any previous epoch in the history of the land. There are no indications that this offensive against the more alert and conscious section of the labor movement is going to cease. On the contrary, there are many signs that point unquestionably to its continuation with ever more vigor.

The recent decision of the United States supreme court in the Gitlow case upholding the conviction of Benjamin Gitlow means that the highest legal tribunal has placed its final sanction upon the so-called criminal syndicalist laws on the statute books of thirty-five states. This decision is comparable with the Dred Scott decision by which the supreme court at that time placed its "final sanction" upon chattel slavery. The decision sends Gitlow back to Sing Sing, and confronts William Z. Foster, C. E. Ruthenberg, Robert Minor, William F. Dunne and twenty-eight other Communist workers with the danger of long prison sentences for "assembling." One hundred and twenty-seven union miners have been tried recently in West Virginia under an injunction against picketing. Injunctions are obtained from the courts now in every labor dispute, big or little, by the class enemies of the workers. Prosecution of workers in California merely for being members of the I. W. W., continues. An international officer of the American Federation of Labor and the international vice-president of the Street Carmen's Union have been indicted on framed-up charges by a Buffalo grand jury for strike activity of three years ago. Ten workers face trial under Pennsylvania's infamous sedition act for distributing literature explaining the struggles of the workers.

Special legislation against the foreign-born places every active, alien union and radical worker in danger of deportation.

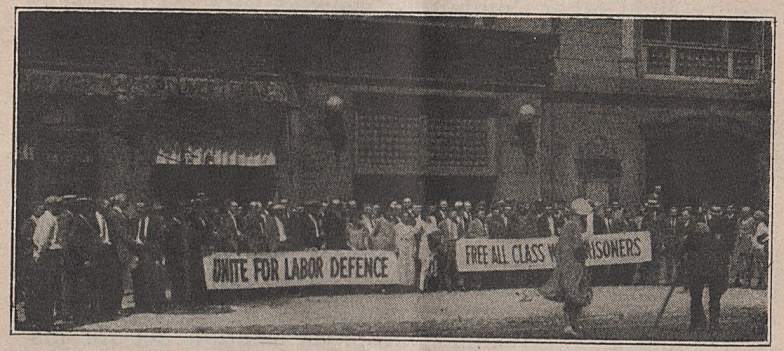
The growing movement for organization of Negro workers and farmers has increased the special persecutions from which they have always suffered. Many Negro workers, farmers and soldiers are in prisons for no other reason than that they have either tried to organize themselves in labor and farmer unions or otherwise sought protection against exploitation and the torture and murder of members of their race.

Mooney and Billings, Sacco and Vanzetti, Matt Schmidt and J. B. McNamara, Ford and Suhr, Rangel and Cline, and many others, soldiers of the working class, wear away their lives in prison and all efforts to secure their release so far have failed.

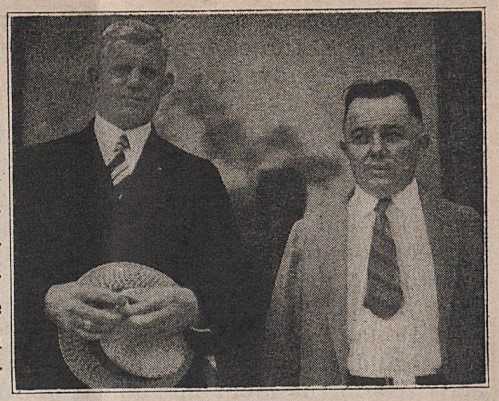
The military court martial in Hawaii has sentenced two American soldiers, Crouch and Trumbull, to military prison for expressing political opinions. These facts and many more that could be cited are proof that the offensive against the labor movement has been broadened in the last ten years to include all sections of the working class.

Abroad, since the war, the workers and peasants of Europe have had to suffer constant and bloody oppression at the hands of capitalist reaction. In Italy, Germany, Hungary and especially in the Balkan and Baltic states, in India, China and Africa, in Haiti, Mexico, Central and South America the workers and farmers are terrorized by the open reign of violence instituted against them by the capitalist governments.

Workers' organizations are declared illegal, thousands of workers and peasants fill the jails, and in many countries the spokesmen and leaders of the workers are murdered without trial. These bloody excesses against the working class abroad demand not only emphatic protest but active support of the workers' defense in these countries by the American working class.



Delegates to the conference in front of Ashland Auditorium.



Andrew T. McNamara of the Machinists' District Council of Pittsburgh and Anton Johannson, representing Chicago Carpenters. Delegate McNamara was elected National Chairman of International Lafor Defense.

The continued persecution of the workers in this country and the unmistakable signs of its intensification call for the organization of all the forces at the disposal of the workers for the struggle against this terror and its sponsors. This condition, if allowed to continue, will mean the destruction, or at best, the serious weakening of the labor movement. The need of this period is for every conscious worker to pledge his support to a concerted movement whose purpose is to concentrate the resistance of the whole working class and all those sympathetic to the cause of the workers, in defense of the militants who are singled out or grouped together for a target of attack by organized capitalism.

Until now, workers' defense has been spontaneous and sporadic. Defense committees have been created hastily as cases arise and frequently have had to depend on workers without adequate connection and experience to properly handle them. Wide-spread publicity often is not secured and the power of the labor movement at large is not mustered for the defense. As a consequence, many obscure workers have been railroaded to prison without the knowledge of the labor movement, "unknown soldiers" of the class war. All possible forces must be rallied for the defense of every worker attacked thru the courts or otherwise by the agents of capitalism.

This conference, consisting of delegates from all sections of the labor movement and from existing labor defense bodies, sets up the International Labor Defense for the purpose of fulfilling this mission. The International

Labor Defense is a non-partisan organization. Its object is to unite all forces for labor defense. It constitutes itself as an ever-ready and ever-willing champion for the defense of all workers attacked for their activity in the labor movement, for expression of political opinion or for industrial affiliation.

The International Labor Defense will seek to collect material and give publicity to all cases of working class persecution, to expose brutal treatment of class war prisoners and to bare secret anti-labor activities such as labor spy systems, etc. This conference proclaims that the International Labor Defense stands ready to provide legal, moral and material aid to all workers persecuted for their activities in the labor movement or for expression of opinion. The conference considers it a first duty of the working class to look after the comfort and well being of its hostages to capitalism and to supply material comforts and the means of existence to their families.

The International Labor Defense will organize and lead nation-wide campaigns for the release of all class war prisoners, conduct a relentless struggle against anti-labor legislation, and fight for the repeal of all criminal syndicalism, criminal anarchy and sedition laws—exceptional measures designed to give a legal covering to the attacks of the ruling class upon militant workers and the whole labor movement.

The conference sends its warmest fraternal greetings to all class war prisoners in America and to the victims of the white terror abroad. It declares its unqualified solidarity with the exploited workers and farmers the world over and appeals to them and to all sections of the American labor movement to rally to the International Labor Defense in its task of fighting back the capitalist jailers and hangmen.

Unite For Labor Defense!
Demand The Release of All Class War Prisoners!
Fight Against Deportation!
Fight Against All Anti-Labor Legislation!
Fight Against Criminal Syndicalism Laws!



RESOLUTIONS.

Unanimously adopted by the National Defense Conference, Ashland Auditorium, Chicago, June 28, 1925.



James P. Cannon, chairman of the conference and now Executive Secretary of International Labor Defense with George Maurer, Secretary of the Labor Defense Council which merged with the new organization.

1. The Fight for Release of Class War Prisoners.

The fight for the release of the imprisoned fighters for the cause of labor is one of the most important problems on the agenda of the American Labor Movement. Every worker in prison for the "crime" of loyalty to his class represents a victory for the capitalist exploiters and an injury to the workers. The continued confinement of so large a number of the most conscious elements of the working-class without any real protest against it, is of itself a sign of weakness in the labor movement. The indifference and neglect which characterizes too large a section of the labor movement in regard to this burning question is a greater danger to the movement as a whole. It encourages the exploiters of labor and their subverted "legal" and "illegal" agencies of persecution to go ever farther with their methods of terror, while, at the same time, it weakens the morale of the workers.

It must be recorded to the shame of the labor movement that Mooney and Billings, victims of the most atrocious frame-up in all labor history, still languish in prison. Sacco and Vanzetti, courageous fighters for the working class, still stand in the shadow of the gallows. Rangel and Cline and their comrades who went into Texas prisons in the best years of their youth have already spent more than twelve years there. Ford and Suhr, intrepid leaders of the Wheatland hop-pickers' strike have already paid for their courage and devotion to the workers with a dozen years of imprisonment. The I. W. W. men who defended their union hall in Centralia, Washington, deserve the gratitude of the whole labor movement, but their rewards are long terms of imprisonment. Scores of workers in California have been thrown into San Quentin and Folsom prisons for the crime of being I. W. W.'s.

Crouch and Trumbull, soldiers in the United States army, expressed their sympathy with the cause of the colonial workers in Hawaii and declared their solidarity with the revolutionary workers' movement. It cost them court martial and sentence to military prison.

In West Virginia, 137 union miners were made to stand trial only recently for picketing mines against scabs. In Maine, Ohio and other states, workers and groups of workers are expiating behind bars the crime of activity in the ranks of labor that won for them frame-ups and perversions of justice.

In addition to these workers already convicted, prosecutions are now pending against many others. The action of the Supreme Court in sustaining the conviction of Benj. Gitlow, confronts Foster, Ruthenberg and thirty others in the Michigan cases with the danger of prison terms. Fred Merrick and nine other communists are facing trial in Pennsylvania on the charge of "sedition" for circulating working-class literature.

The labor movement must be awakened from its slumber and must be roused to the menacing significance of the attempt of the capitalists to break the morale of the working-class by imprisoning its best fighters. The workers must not be allowed to forget those who lie in prison for them, but must be stirred into action in their defense.

Systematic and widespread publicity must be conducted in regard to the situation in general and each specific case must be made known to the masses of workers. Agitation must be commenced in all labor organizations in behalf of class-war prisoners and preparations made for great mass protests against their continued imprisonment. General and special campaigns must be organized and carried on with ever-increasing energy and momentum.



Ben. Gitlow, recently remanded to Sing Sing by a decision of the Supreme Court, a delegate to the conference.

The International Labor Defense will take the initiative to organize a wide-spread campaign for the unconditional release of imprisoned fighters of the class struggle and will endeavor to unite all the forces of conscious and militant labor for this fight.

2. Against Injunctions and Anti-Labor Legislation.



The campaign of the exploiters to crush and terrorize the organizations of the workers includes, among its most effective weapons, special anti-labor legislation and the arbitrary use of court injunctions against workers in the midst of the struggle. Criminal syndicalism laws of an almost uniform type are now on the statute books of thirty-five states and serve as the most handy "legal" weapons at the disposal of the bosses. These laws are supplemented by lesser statutes, such as anti-picketing laws, and by decisions of the highest courts in the several states and the union, designed to close every door to the legality of the labor movement. The use of autocratic injunctions in labor disputes turns over to corporation hirelings on the bench virtual control over the activities of workers' organizations and shuts them off from all means of legal redress.

The infamous Daugherty injunction issued by Judge Wilkerson practically outlawed the great railroad shopmen's strike of 1922 and paralyzed its activity in all parts of the country. The notorious Busick injunction in California condemned members of the I. W. W. to prison without the right of trial. Practically every industrial dispute in recent years has brought with it the issuance of injunctions calculated to break down the resistance of fighting workers.

Criminal syndicalist laws and injunctions are aimed not only against the revolutionary sections of the working class. The whole organized labor movement is menaced by this legislative and judicial tyranny. The persecutions of the more radical workers by these means are only experiments in preparation for their wholesale use against all sections of the labor movement which show any disposition to fight for the interests of the workers. There is already abundant evidence of the intentions of the capitalists in this regard.



Lovett Fort-Whiteman represented the Negro Labor Congress.

It is a matter of the greatest urgency to make the organized workers generally understand that the persecution of the I. W. W. members in California and other Western states and the railroading of Communists in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York are rehearsals for wholesale campaigns of the same character against wider sections of the labor movement.

The defense of the I. W. W. and the Communists in these cases is the concern of the whole organized labor movement. The fight against criminal syndicalism laws and the use of injunctions is the fight of the working class as a whole.

The International Labor Defense will undertake as one of its principle activities the organization of a campaign throughout the whole labor movement against criminal syndicalist and other anti-labor laws and injunctions.

3. Legal Aid.



Inadequate and incompetent legal defense has eased the way for the framing up and railroading of many workers. Able defense counsel and widespread attendant publicity are obligations which the labor movement owes to every worker who is put on trial for his activities in the class struggle. The employment of qualified attorneys is necessary not only from the standpoint of legal technique and procedure. The correct policy is to secure the services of competent lawyers and, by combining their work in the court room with organized publicity and protest, to transform court trials of workers into propaganda demonstrations in which the capitalist persecutors are put on trial before the working class.

An important item in the pages of workers' persecution is long confinement of defendents awaiting trial. A substantial bail fund must be provided to ensure the liberty of persecuted workers pending trial.

These projects require large sums of money which must be raised by workers in defense of their persecuted brothers. A great defense treasury to be expended in procuring the best possible court actions for workers on trial for their activity must be created. A large national bail fund, established thru loans from workers and individuals and organizations sympathetic to their cause, must be ready to secure the release of workers pending trial.

The International Labor Defense calls upon all class-conscious workers and all sympathizers of the labor move-

ment to do their full share toward providing the funds necessary for this work.

4. Information and Publicity.

The labor movement is not generally informed of the facts of labor persecution and perversions of justice in labor cases. Conspiracies against labor are frequently carried out in secret. Many an obscure worker has been railroaded to the penitentiary without its being known publicly. Those cases that cannot be kept secret very often do not receive the interest they require and deserve. Labor spy systems flourish, foreign-born workers are deported, class-war prisoners are maltreated and workers are flagrantly deprived of constitutional rights without the knowledge or protest of the labor movement as a whole.

These matters are of vital concern to the masses of the workers. Every unprotested persecution engenders more. Unacquaintance with the methods of frame-up, ignorance of the extent of perverted class-justice and lack of knowledge generally of the conditions of labor persecution involves the danger of unpreparedness. Silence concerning their excesses encourages the labor-baiters to more violent ones.

Widespread, systematic and organized publicity must be created to throw glaring search lights upon all of these crimes against the workers. Not a single instance of labor-baiting should be allowed to escape the attention of the labor movement.

It is the aim of International Labor Defense to develop publicity toward this end in all its forms. Regular press service, public meetings, motion pictures, books, pamphlets, leaflets, stickers and posters shall be utilized for extending to every corner of the labor movement the exact news and data about all cases of working class persecution. In addition to these, the National Conference is of the opinion that an illustrated monthly magazine devoted to the cause of Labor Defense should be published as soon as a sufficient organizational base is established to assure its success.



5. Prison Relief

It is not to the credit of the labor movement that its fighters who are in jail for their activities in the class-struggle are frequently neglected and deprived of the ordinary comforts of tobacco, books and other necessities that help to mitigate in some degree the horrors of confinement.

Shut out from the world and from the movement for which they are sacrificing their liberty, these fighters are deserving of all the material comforts that can be supplied them. And, what is equally important, they must be kept in communication with the movement by means of frequent and regular letters from those outside. Such letters from all parts of the country from members of the workers' movement, sealing the bonds of solidarity and expressing fraternal remembrance of the imprisoned fighters, keeps up the morale of these captives of capitalism and strengthens their will and courage to face their prison burdens. At the same time, the letters in return from the class-war prisoners, serve as constant reminders to those outside of their duty.

International Labor Defense will devote special attention to the organization of this work. It will undertake to institute all the necessary arrangements required to establish extensive communication between those outside and those confined and raise special funds for the maintenance of systematic provision of material comforts and necessaries of life to class-war prisoners.

6. Relief for Dependents of Imprisoned Fighters in The Class War.

The weakest spot in the armor of the revolutionary working-class fighter is concern for his dependents and the fear that they will be neglected while he is confined in prison and powerless to protect them. It must be recorded to the shame of the labor movement that poverty, hardship and neglect have too often been the fate of dependent families and the consciousness of it eats into the very hearts of those in prison.

This is so only because defense work is not properly organized and because the workers are allowed too soon to forget those who fought for them. The heart of the working class is warm and sound. The workers will respond readily to an organized appeal which reminds them of their duty to the dependent families of their imprisoned fighters.

The conference appeals to all workers to respond liberally to a special fund to be set up by the International Labor Defense for the purpose of relieving the hardships of the mothers, wives and children of the soldiers of the class war who sacrifice their lives or liberty for the cause of labor. The International Labor Defense feels it a first duty of the labor movement to provide regular material and financial aid to the dependents of class war prisoners.

7. The White Terror in Other Capitalist Countries.



Zankov, the "Butcher of Bulgaria".

In almost every capitalist country in the world white terror is raging against the workers. The imperialist masters of the world, and particularly in Europe, are attempting to exterminate the revolutionary movement of the exploited working class by wholesale murders, jailing and tortures.

In the Balkan countries, the labor movement has lost all semblance of legal rights. In Roumania, Bulgaria and Jugo-Slavia, labor unions and organizations of farmers are outlawed. The slightest protest from the workers and poor farmers calls forth the most bloody campaigns of murder and persecution. In Bulgaria alone, no less than four thousand workers and peasants have been murdered by the black reactionary Zankov government. In Poland the white terror rages with the greatest fury and claims thousands of victims. In Hungary, Italy and the Baltic states, the fascist tools of foreign imperialists have murdered workers and jailed them in great numbers. In Germany and the rest of Western Europe thousands of workers lie in prison for their resistance against intolerable economic exploitation and ruthless political tyranny.

This is of the most vital concern to American workers whose fate is indissolubly bound up with the fate of workers in other lands. The class struggle is an international struggle and demands the international solidarity of the workers of all countries.

This conference declares itself heart and soul for the cause of internationalism and reaches out fraternal hands to oppressed workers and exploited peoples in all lands who fight and suffer under the iron heel of capitalism.

The conference dedicates the International Labor Defense to whole-hearted support of the victims of the white terror in other lands. It sends fraternal greetings to the Labor Defense organizations thruout the world and pledges its co-operation in the work of aiding class war prisoners in all capitalist countries.

8. Co-operation and Unity of Defense Forces.

The defense of persecuted fighters for the cause of labor and the fraternal support of their dependents is a common platform upon which all sincere workers who be-

lieve in the principle of the class struggle can unite. This activity is the concern of every class conscious worker and merits the full support of all sections of the workers' movement and all those sympathetic to the cause of labor.

The International Labor Defense is dedicated to the principle of unity in the common fight and will endeavor to weld together into one body all the forces of the labor movement for the struggle against working class persecution and for the defense and support of persecuted fighters and their families.

Where special circumstances create the necessity for separate, independent defense bodies, the International Labor Defense will strive to co-ordinate its activities with their's in such a way as to ensure the maximum of defense endeavors on the basis of fraternal unity in the common fight for common aims. The primary duty of the International Labor Defense will be to rally all possible support in defense of workers persecuted for their activities in the class struggle, without exception.

CONSTITUTION.

Article I.—Name.

The name of the organization shall be INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE.

Article II.—Aims.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE aims to fraternally unite all forces willing to co-operate in the work of labor defense into a broad national organization based upon individual and collective membership that will stand as an ever-willing and ever-ready champion for the defense and support of all workers and exploited farmers, regardless of their political or industrial affiliations, race, color, or nationality, who are persecuted on account of their activity in the struggle for the class interests of the workers and exploited farmers.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE takes upon itself the following obligations:

1. To initiate and centralize general and special campaigns for the release of class-war prisoners, for the repeal of all criminal syndicalism laws, against anti-labor legislation, against persecution of trade unions and strikers, and against persecution and deportation of foreign-born workers.

2. To collect material and give widespread publicity by all possible means to all facts pertaining to working-class persecution, to publicly expose brutal treatment of political prisoners, and to expose secret anti-labor activities, such as labor spy systems, etc.

3. To provide legal defense for all workers prosecuted for expression of opinion or for working-class activity.

4. To provide material and moral support for all class-war prisoners.

5. To provide material support for the families and dependents of such prisoners.

6. To organize widespread campaigns of protest against the white terror in other capitalist and in colonial and semi-colonial countries and to give moral and financial aid wherever possible to the victims of such terror.

Article III.—Membership.

Section 1. Every person who signs an application card subscribing to the aims of the organization and agreeing to comply with its constitution shall be entitled to membership in INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE.

Section 2. INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE branches are formed in all enterprises, institutions, groups, cities, neighborhoods, schools, and other organizations, provided there are at least five members. Branches shall also be formed of workers speaking foreign languages.

Section 3. All members shall be attached to duly constituted branches. Where branches do not exist they shall become members-at-large.

Section 4. Two or more branches in the same city shall send delegates to the local central committee proportional to their membership. The local central committees constitute the governing bodies of the organization in each locality.

Section 5. All workers' organizations such as labor unions, workers' fraternal and benefit societies, etc., which sympathize with the aims of INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE shall be entitled to collective membership upon payment of an agreed monthly contribution.

Section 6. Each organization affiliated with INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE shall be entitled to send a delegate to the local central committee.

Section 7. The local central committees shall be directly connected with and receive instructions from the national organization. Isolated branches which are not connected with any local central committee shall be directly connected with the national organization.

Article IV.—Administration.

Section 1. The highest body of INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE is the National Conference, which is to be held about once a year, on the basis of proportional representation of the membership. Representation of collectively affiliated membership is to be decided by the National Executive Committee.

Section 2. The National Conference elects a National Committee of 35 members which leads and directs the work of the organization between conferences. The National Committee shall have the right to add to its number. The National Committee shall meet four or five times a year to review the past activities and lay out plans for the ensuing period.

Section 3. The National Committee selects a smaller executive committee to directly supervise and control the daily work of the organization.

Section 4. The Executive Committee elects a National Secretary and other necessary officers.

Section 5. The local central committee elects the local executive committee. The local executive committee selects the local secretary and the other officers who may be necessary for the local work.

Section 6. In order to facilitate the development of the activities of INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE among workers of foreign speaking nationalities, the National Committee shall organize special committees of workers in these nationalities who will carry on their special work in the various languages under the instruction of the National Committee. These special committees which show substantial activity may be entitled to have one representative each in the National Committee.

Section 7. All special language committees, local executive committees, and local officials must carry on their work in harmony with the National Office, and according to the instruction of the National Executive Committee. The National Executive Committee has the right to remove officials who do not comply with its policies and decisions and to require new elections.

Article V.—Dues.

Section 1. Individual members pay monthly dues of 10c to the secretary of the branch. Members-at-large pay dues directly to the National Office.

Section 2. Affiliated local organizations shall pay an agreed monthly sum to the local central committee.

Section 3. Affiliated national organizations shall pay an agreed monthly sum to the National Office.

Section 4. Branches turn over the full amount from dues collected to the local central committees. The local central committee may in some cases retain a percentage of the dues collected from the branches for local administrative expenses by agreement with the National office. Local organizations must render to the National Office regular, itemized monthly financial reports.

128 Class-War Prisoners IN AMERICA

Get Them OUT!

JOIN INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE!

Branches in All Cities

Dues 10c a Month

INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE
23 So. Lincoln St., Chicago, Ill.

